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ABSTRACT

A practicum aimed to improve the attitudes toward recreational reading of 12 intermediate grade level English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students so that they would share their enthusiasm and interests in pleasure reading, as well as devote more time to reading. The writer met with parents of ESL students to discuss ways they could encourage recreational reading and school success; scheduled time for recreational reading in the classroom; developed students' interest in newspapers; encouraged students to write, edit, and read their own news of current events using a microphone; had students write their own books; and prepared a grant so that recreational reading materials would be available to the students. Results indicate that the practicum, carried out in a large city in the midwest, was very successful. Students chose recreational reading when given an option of self-selected reading or other activities. They were able to discuss what they had read and found it less difficult to read for pleasure. (An appendix contains the student questionnaire.) (SR)

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ED347509

Improving Intermediate Grade Level English-as-a-Second-Language Students' Attitudes Toward Recreational Reading

by

Debra E. Kaminsky

Cluster XLII

A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1992

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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This practicum report was submitted by Debra E. Kaminsky under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

June 14, 1992
Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

Improving Intermediate Level English-as-a-Second Language Students' Attitudes Toward Recreational Reading. Kaminsky, Debra E., 1992: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Reading Habits/Recreational Reading/Sustained Silent Reading/Reading Attitudes/Attitudes Toward Reading/Student Motivation/Reading Aloud To Others/Reading Interests Of Intermediate Level Children/Parental Encouragement/Reading Role Models/Reading

This practicum was designed to address the problem of the need for improving the intermediate grade level ESL students' attitudes towards recreational reading. The students were not choosing to read during the periods of time provided for individual activity choices within the ESL classroom, and they were not choosing recreational reading as an activity at home when they had extra time available. The goal of the practicum was to improve the intermediate grade level ESL students' attitudes towards recreational reading so that they would share their enthusiasm and interests in pleasure reading, as well as devote more time to recreational reading.

The writer met with parents of ESL students to discuss ways they could encourage recreational reading and school success; scheduled time for recreational reading in the classroom; developed students' interest in newspapers; encouraged students to write, edit, and read their own news of current events using a microphone; had students write their own books; and prepared a grant so that recreational reading materials would be available to the students.

The results of the practicum were very successful. The students chose recreational reading when given an option of self-selected reading or other activities. They were able to discuss what they had read and found it less difficult to read for pleasure.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The work setting is an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program in a large metropolitan city in the midwest. The socioeconomic status of this community ranges from the low to the upper middle class income level. This is an old and changing multiethnic community.

The school in which this project is being conducted has a student enrollment consisting of approximately 500 students whose racial/ethnic background is made up of 42.1% white, 44.0% Hispanic, 6.4% black, and 7.5% other. Its teaching staff is 59% minority and 41% nonminority. The population involved in this project includes 9 boys and 3 girls, who are intermediate grade level ESL students. The children come from Pakistan, Philippines, Jordan, Israel, Korea, Turkey, and Thailand. They are fairly fluent in the English language.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is the ESL teacher of this program. She has a bachelor of arts degree in psychology, general social sciences and elementary education. She holds a master's degree as a reading specialist and has completed additional coursework in educational administration and supervision and English-as-a-Second-Language instruction. She is certified as an early childhood and intermediate and upper elementary educator, reading specialist supervisor, and English-as-a-Second-Language instructor in two states. She has worked with various ethnic groups, has had experience working in a variety of schools with all grade levels and different programs. She has been a teacher trainer and curriculum developer at the city and state levels.

Her concern is for the educational progress of her students in learning and using English as a second language, and meeting the students' and their families' needs in adjusting to the American lifestyle. English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students are taken from their regular classroom and grouped according to their fluency and grade level. Listening, speaking, reading, writing, culture, various content areas, and survival skills are some of the things that are taught to the students on a daily basis during their 40-minute class period.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The intermediate grade level ESL students' attitudes towards recreational reading needed improvement. The students were not choosing to read during the periods of time provided for individual activity choices within the ESL classroom and they were not choosing recreational reading as an activity at home when they had extra time available. In brief, the attitudes of the intermediate grade level ESL students appeared to be negative towards recreational reading.

Problem Documentation

Evidence of this problem was supported by observations, interviews, and questionnaires. During the fall of 1991, observation and record keeping of three 40-minute ESL class periods indicated that when given an option of self-selected reading or other activities, none of the 12 children chose recreational reading. The children would rather work with language cards and a Language Master to increase their

reading speed, intonation, and vocabulary. They also preferred to do various programs on the computer, or draw.

For two weeks during the fall of 1991, children were interviewed on Monday and asked whether they had done any recreational reading during the past week. None of the children had done any recreational reading. The children indicated that they had just watched television or played around the house.

The results of a questionnaire completed by the children in the fall of 1991 indicated that 10 out of 12 children would rather watch television than read when they had nothing to do at home. After completing the teacher-made questionnaire and interviewing the children in the fall of 1991, 11 out of 12 children felt that it was sometimes hard for them to read because the books and the words were sometimes difficult for them.

Causative Analysis

It is the writer's belief that there were several causes for the problem. There were very few recreational reading books available in the ESL classroom. There was always very limited funds available for the ESL program. The children did not have recreational reading books at home either. Many of the children had to leave all of their first-language books in their homeland, and they had not purchased many books in English.

There was not a regular librarian in the school at the time, and the children were not encouraged to use the public library. Many of the parents were afraid to allow their children to go to the library by themselves. Therefore, the children did not have ready access to books and were not encouraged to do recreational reading.

The children's parents were unable to read in English. These children lacked the role that parents could play as role models for reading in English. They were unable to get the help from their parents that they needed in order to understand, or discuss what they were reading.

Watching television at home does improve the children's listening and speaking comprehension, but it may also take away from the emphasis on reading for pleasure. The emphasis on workbooks and skill drill activities also may have taken from the time for promoting reading for pleasure. A greater portion of the class period had been taken up with work on workbook pages to develop vocabulary, phonics, and comprehension skills.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Review of the literature gives evidence of the problem of the need to improve students' attitudes toward recreational reading. Two important factors that may be critical to the development and continuance of recreational reading behavior are interest in the content, and difficulty

of the text. Children are not likely to continue reading if the book is of little interest or requires too much effort. Books that are interesting and can be read easily are likely to start children on the reading habit. Therefore, the book selection decisions each child makes, or is helped to make, are crucial. Anderson, Higgins, and Wurster (1985) suggest that low achievers may not choose suitable books for recreational reading because appropriate books may not be available, children may not know how to judge a suitable book, or children could be choosing books for "show" rather than pleasure reading. They suggest that teachers can help children make good reading choices by (a) regularly reading aloud books that are easier for the students, (b) stocking the classroom library with a full range of topics and levels, and (c) feature and give status to shorter stories and books.

Children's attitudes are very important to learning. Teachers should help students to identify beliefs, their special goals, and make an effort to develop positive attitudes in skill performance. By establishing motivation and enthusiasm in the classroom, more learning takes place. Recreational reading is an important part of any reading program. It not only helps children to enjoy reading, but it helps to expand their experiential background, provides practice in decoding and the use of context clues, and develops meaning vocabulary. The way students feel

about reading is closely related to their degree of success with it.

Beckman (1984) points out the importance of turning reluctant readers into lifetime readers. She emphasizes the importance of having the time to practice reading and the need for having many interesting reading materials for the students. Lancy and Hayes (1988) note that many children have not had the opportunity to find personal satisfaction in the books they read to the extent that they choose reading as a recreational or free time activity.

Howard (1988) maintains that attitudes develop early and methods must be found to get students to read material that means something good to them because a negative attitude towards reading must be changed before significant reading growth can be achieved. The way in which students feel about reading is closely related to the degree of success that they have with it. The attitude of the students is important to the outcomes that they have from their work. Attitudes are developed on the basis of a person's degree of success or lack of it. The Commission of Reading in its summary of research (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) concluded that "becoming a skilled reader requires. . . learning that written material can be interesting" (p. 18).

The literature reveals several causes for the problem. Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) maintain

that children of every age and ability should be doing more extended silent reading and most children do not read often during their free time. Herber and Nelson-Herber (1987) suggest that teachers need to design their reading program with guidance and practice for the students to apply reading skills, and structure activities in which students practice these skills in a more independent manner. They suggest that teachers should design their instruction to show students ways to apply reading and reasoning processes correctly to the materials, ideas, and purposes established for study.

Neuman (1982) points out that recreational reading is influenced by the amount of television that children watch in their leisure time. Madden (1988) suggests that there is often a lack of opportunities for students to help each other to build their self esteem in reading activities. He also maintains that poor attitudes towards reading causes children to select other activities instead of choosing reading when the option is given.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of the practicum was to improve the intermediate grade level ESL students' attitudes towards recreational reading. The students would share their enthusiasm and interests in pleasure reading, as well as devote more time to recreational reading.

Expected Outcomes

1. When given an option of self-selected reading or other activities, 7 of the 12 students will choose recreational reading.
2. When the children are interviewed on Monday and asked whether they have done any recreational reading during the past week, 7 of the 12 students will be able to discuss what they have read.
3. After completing the same teacher-made questionnaire that was given at the beginning of the project, 7 out of 12 students will choose to read rather than watch television

when they have nothing to do at home.

4. After interviewing the students and completing the same teacher-made questionnaire that was given at the beginning of the project, 7 out of 12 students will not feel that it is sometimes hard for them to read.

Measurement of Outcomes

The outcomes were measured by observation and record keeping of the number of children choosing recreational reading when they were given the option of self-selected reading or other activities. The children were interviewed on Monday for two weeks and asked whether they had done any recreational reading during the past week. The same questionnaire that was given at the beginning of the project was completed by the children at the end of the project,indicating the number of children that would rather watch television than read when they had nothing to do. After completing the same teacher-made questionnaire that was given at the beginning of the project, and interviewing the children, the same procedure was done at the end of the project to indicate the number of children who felt that it was sometimes hard for them to read because the books and the words were sometimes difficult for them.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

A log of daily activities was kept to record unexpected events, and to focus on the outcomes of the practicum.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Neuman (1982) suggests providing children with stimulating reading materials. Her analysis indicated that the students who were inclined to watch three or more hours of television per day, and read less than two books per month, chose lower quality books. She recommends providing children with reading materials that are both interesting and varied.

Manning and Manning (1984) recommend that students read self-selected materials and pace their own reading. They suggest that the students get involved in various activities such as small group and paired discussions about books, oral reading in pairs, and sharing books through puppetry and dramatization. Herber and Nelson-Herber (1987) and Casteel (1989) maintain that students should share their understandings through discussion and writing, and by doing this, they in turn help other students refine and extend their own skills.

Using a variety of games and activities that include

various reading skills such as listening, following directions, concentration, writing, and comprehension are suggested by Howard (1988) and Lancy and Hayes (1988). The structure of the classroom should be easily adaptable to a variety of reading activities. Growth in reading is achieved best in a friendly, caring, and comfortable atmosphere where the teachers and students are able to focus on what they are doing together in a positive manner.

Quintero and Huerta-Macias (1990) and O'Masta and Wolf (1990) emphasize the important part that parents have in encouraging recreational reading and improving their child's attitude towards it. It is necessary to disseminate information to the parents about developing literacy at home and school, in addition to providing suggestions concerning other areas of parenting. Increasing parents' self-confidence in encouraging their children in reading is important, in addition to providing parents with opportunities to interact in a positive way with their child about reading.

Tudor and Hafiz (1989) suggest that intermediate level ESL students should read more simplified reading materials to improve their language skills, and to improve their attitude towards recreational reading. By reading more simplified materials, the students are able to increase and reinforce their vocabulary, as well as find enjoyment

in the reading materials, since they are better able to understand them.

In addition to the solutions suggested by the literature, other ideas were explored. A meeting was held after school hours to discuss ways that limited English-speaking parents could encourage recreational reading and school success. The teacher read parts of interesting books aloud to motivate the children to want to read it for themselves. The children were given one class period per week for silent reading.

Local newspapers were brought for the class to read and discuss current events. Students wrote and read their own news about current events to their classmates using a microphone in the room. This also increased their oral reading and speaking skills.

A newsletter was sent home to the students' parents discussing some of the activities that were being done in class. Ideas were given on how to encourage the children to read. The students were encouraged to have library cards and a field trip to the public library was scheduled. The students were shown the different sections of the library and the services that are available to them.

A proposal for a grant was written by the writer and funded so that recreational reading materials could be purchased for use with this project. The children purchased their own recreational reading materials once a month with

a publisher's book club. The students wrote and designed their own books which were kept in the classroom library. They selected the best 3 student-made books, which were entered in the district Young Author's Contest.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The intermediate grade level ESL students had access to an average of three to five titles per child and about half of these were recycled for new books every 30 days. There was a greater emphasis on reading for pleasure, increasing language skills, and gaining new knowledge about different topics. Pencils that have reading slogans printed on them, various stickers, and attractive stamps were given as awards for various accomplishments throughout the project.

The project succeeded because the writer was excited about having the children use the materials that had been received through the money that was awarded with the grant. This excitement was shared by the children. The writer was also enthusiastic and motivated to improve the intermediate grade level ESL students' attitudes toward recreational reading with this project.

Report of Action Taken

First, reading for enjoyment was discussed with the children. A meeting was held after school hours to discuss ways that limited English-speaking parents could encourage

recreational reading and school success. The teacher showed the children some of the new books and talked about them to motivate the children to read. The children were given a 40-minute period each week to look through and read one or two books. The teacher read when the children read, and everyone was free to discuss something exciting or interesting that was being read at the time. The children selected a book to borrow and take home on a weekly basis.

During the second and third weeks, the teacher read parts of interesting books aloud to motivate the children to want to read them for themselves. The children were given book orders from a publishing company's book club. The various books were discussed with the children. A letter was sent with the book order to encourage the parents to order the books for the students' reading pleasure. The children and the teacher had a silent reading period for 40 minutes during each week. The children borrowed one recreational reading book per week from the classroom library. The students designed a book cover with a two paragraph summary of the book that they enjoyed reading. These were put on a bulletin board in the room.

During the fourth through the seventh week, the 40-minute reading period and opportunity for book selection continued. Local newspapers were brought for the class to read and discuss current events. Students wrote and read their own news about current events to their classmates

using a microphone in the room. The students chose another student to edit their news report and discuss grammar, punctuation, word meanings, and spelling errors. They also decided to do commercial breaks on nutrition, drug education, and safety. The students added weather reports, jokes and riddles.

The students developed their own posters about reading for pleasure, which were put on the hallway bulletin board of the school. The children practiced their oral reading speed and intonation of their voice using simple children's literature with cassette tapes.

During Weeks 8 through 13 a newsletter was sent home to the students' parents discussing some of the activities that were being done in class. Ideas were given on how to encourage the children to read. The children were able to purchase recreational reading materials from apublisher's book club. When the books arrived, the children shared and looked at the various materials that were purchased.

The children wrote and designed their own books which are kept in the classroom library. The students selected the best 3 student-made books, which were then entered in the district Young Author's Contest. They were encouraged to have library cards, and a field trip to the public library was scheduled. The students chose a partner,and each student selected a favorite book to read

to the other person.

A record was kept of the amount of time spent that the students actually read during the weekly 40-minute silent reading time. The children were interviewed on two successive Mondays and asked what type of recreational reading they did. The students were asked to write their feelings about the silent reading time and what some of their favorite reading activities were, and why. The teacher-made questionnaire was again given to the children to see if there was an improvement in their attitudes toward recreational reading. It was hoped that at least 7 of the 12 children would choose to read during three free choice activity times during the last two weeks of this project.

During the three month implementation phase of this practicum, there were no difficulties or deviations from the implementation plan encountered by the writer. Everyone involved in this practicum were enthusiastic and interested throughout the implementation phase.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The intermediate grade level ESL students' attitudes toward recreational reading needed improvement. The students were not choosing to read during the periods of time provided for individual activity choices within the ESL classroom, and they were not choosing recreational reading as an activity at home when they had extra time available. In brief, the attitudes of the intermediate grade level ESL students appeared to be negative toward recreational reading.

It is the writer's belief that there were several causes for the problem. There were very few recreational reading books available in the ESL classroom, since there has always been limited funds available for the ESL program. The children did not have recreational reading books at home, since many of the children had to leave all of their first-language books in their homeland and they had not purchased many books in English. The children lacked the role model for reading in English that their parents could play, since their parents are unable to read in English.

There was too much emphasis on workbooks and skill drill activities in the ESL classroom, which took time away from promoting reading for pleasure.

The solution strategy that was utilized consisted of enabling the intermediate grade level ESL students haveaccess to an average of three to five titles per child and about half of these were recycled for new books every 30 days. There was greater emphasis on reading for pleasure, increasing language skills, and gaining new knowledge about different topics. Pencils that had reading slogans printed on them, various stickers, and attractive stamps were given as awards for various accomplishments throughout the project.

The goal of the practicum was to improve the intermediate grade level ESL students' attitudes toward recreational reading. Additionally, it was hoped that the students would share their enthusiasm and interests in pleasure reading, as well as devote more time to recreational reading.

Expected outcomes for this three month practicum were developed. When given an option of self-selected reading or other activities, it was expected that 7 of the 12 students would choose recreational reading. Before implementation of the practicum, observation and record keeping of three 40-minute ESL class periods indicated that when given an option of self-selected reading or other

activities, none of the 12 children chose recreational reading.

Observation and record keeping of three 40-minute ESL class periods during implementation indicated that all 12 of the students chose recreational reading during the time periods for self-selected reading or other activities. The children were enthusiastic about the books that were now available to them.

When the children were interviewed on Monday and asked whether they had done any recreational reading during the past week, it was expected that 7 of the 12 students would be able to discuss what they had read. Prior to implementation, the children were interviewed on two successive Mondays and asked whether they had done any recreational reading during the past week. None of the children had done any recreational reading. The children had indicated that they had just watched television or played around the house. During the last two weeks of the implementation, all of the students were able to discuss something that they had read during the past week. The students read materials on various topics and were eager to discuss them.

After completing the same teacher-made questionnaire that was given at the beginning of the project, it was expected that 7 out of 12 students would choose to read rather than watch television when they had nothing to do

at home. The results of the questionnaire completed by the children prior to implementation indicated that 10 out of 12 children would rather watch television than read when they had nothing to do at home. At the end of the three month implementation, 8 out of 12 children indicated on the questionnaire that they would rather read than watch television when they had nothing to do at home.

After interviewing the students and completing the same teacher-made questionnaire that was given at the beginning of the project, it was expected that 7 out of 12 students would not feel that it was sometimes hard for them to read. After completing the teacher-made questionnaire and interviewing the children prior to implementation, 11 out of 12 children felt that it was sometimes hard for them to read because the books and the words were sometimes difficult for them. At the end of the three month implementation, 7 out of the 12 children indicated on the questionnaire that they did not feel that it was sometimes hard for them to read.

Discussion

The expected outcomes of this practicum were met. The project was successful because the writer was excited about having the children use the materials that were received with the money that was awarded with the grant.

This excitement was shared by the children. The writer was also enthusiastic and motivated to improve the intermediate grade level ESL students' attitudes toward recreational reading with this project.

Based on the results of this practicum, the writer concludes that less stress on completing workbook pages and skill drills, and more emphasis on pleasure reading would improve students' attitudes toward recreational reading. Providing time for the children to read, varying the books and materials that are available, and making sure most of the materials will be easy for the children to read will enable them to develop a better attitude towards pleasure reading.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the plan will be continued throughout the remainder of the school year.
2. It is recommended that the plan will be used with intermediate grade level ESL students in future years.
3. It is also recommended that research will be reviewed to be aware of current and interesting strategies to promote a positive attitude toward recreational reading.

Dissemination

This practicum has been shared with other members of the school faculty. They were very interested in the

project and the results. The writer presented this practicum at a statewide conference for administrators, educators from preschool to college level, and book publishers who work in the field of bilingual education and English-as-a-Second-Language. The project was well-received.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name_____ Date_____

1.	When I have nothing to do at home, I would rather watch TV than read.	yes no
2.	I like watching a story on TV better than having to read it.	yes no
3.	I read often in my spare time.	yes no
4.	I am a good reader.	yes no
5.	Reading is my favorite thing to do in school.	yes no
6.	I like playing video games more than reading.	yes no
7.	I would like having my parents or teacher read out loud to me.	yes no
8.	It is sometimes hard for me to read.	yes no
9.	I would like to get a book for a present.	yes no
10.	I like to talk to others about books.	yes no
11.	I like to read before I go to bed.	yes no
12.	I wish that my parents would talk with me more often about reading.	yes no